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LETTER

FROM

Mr. LEE

TO MR.

SHERIDAN.

DUBLIN;

Printed in the YEAR
MDCCCLVII.

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И. С. Т. П. Д.

1863 г.

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МАСТЕР

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A P U B L I C Acknowledgment of my sincere Gratitude, for the very favourable and candid Reception I have met with in this Kingdom, was a *Duty* so incumbent on me, that I cou'dn't omit prefixing it to the following Pages; wherein will be exemplify'd both the *Inducement* I originally had to become a Candidate for Favour, and the *Means* that have been since exercis'd to prevent my continuing so on proper Terms.

PUTTIE Actione judgemente of the
private Committee for the levy of taxes
upon the County Recitation I have made
with the said County Recitation was a Day to be
put on the 1st of June I could not be
able to follow the Stage; which is will be
likely to put the County I originally
to pecuniary a Charge for the same, and it
will cost me pecuniary to be present
at the said Committee to be present. To

LETTER

FROM

MR. LEE

TO MR.

SHERIDAN

SIR,

OUR pecuniary and public Accounts being *near* settled, 'tis now become essential to ballance those of *HONOUR* that have hitherto been private between us. This can be only done by a genuine Discovery of our Compact, which 'twas judg'd necessary to defer till the first Transaction was over, lest one Account might casually, and indeed unpleasantly, have broke in upon the other. But your past Administration has all along implied a Misconception of my Silence, and seemed to construe it either *Defect of Penetration*, or a *Confor-*

mity of *Temper* luckily adapted to the Convenience of your deep-plan'd Politicks, and therefore to be treated accordingly.

Hence, in the *Cabinet*, Security has led *Fineffe* into too ample an Exercise against a Person whose Views were all sacrificed to the Support of your critical, exigent, and precarious Situation.

In WHAT MANNER and for WHAT PURPOSE I was INVITED to *Dublin*, let our Epistolary Correspondence first delineate, then a very few Anecdotes will be sufficient to shew how far Words and Actions have since tallied—The Commencement you'll recollect was thus—Application was made to me by your Correspondent, Signor *Pasquali* at *Edinburgh*, to know whether I was open to a Proposal of Consequence and *Duration*; to which I reply'd in the Affirmative; but hearing accidentally that he had expressed the Answer to you in a Phrase *somewhat peculiar* (thro' Inexpertness in the *English* Tongue, as he said) I immediately wrote you an Explanation to the above-mentioned Effect, with this subsequent Remark, That no Proposal but a particular and important one would by any Means be acceptable in a Place where I was an utter Stranger, and that my Inclination naturally prompted me to visit *London*, where my Connexions were strong, and every Effort to please had formerly been cherished by an Increase of public Favour. This (the only Letter indeed that I am without a Copy of) is in Substance nicely similar, as your Possession of it will at all times testify on a Reference thereto.

But, as the Chasm is supply'd, the rest will follow in exact Succession, and verbatim (*to wit*)

To Mr. J O H N L E E,

Master of the Theatre in *Edinburgh*.

S I R,

I HAD the Favour of yours of the 3d instant, and, from an Observation of two Circumstances in it, am apprehensive that an Agreement between us cannot easily be brought about—The first is, your mention of Mrs. *Lee*. As you seem to like Candour in Dealings, it will not offend you if I speak my Mind frankly on this Occasion: Mrs. *Lee* was with me in *Dublin* during a Season; there was no one whose private Conduct I more esteemed; but I know in what Estimation she was held by the Town in her public Capacity, and consequently what Rank she must be placed in; this it is highly probable, from a very allowable Partiality, you would think inferior to her Merit, and hence might arise a Source of perpetual Discontent, to avoid which, were we to engage, I should think it a fundamental Article that Mrs. *Lee* should not play at all.

Another Circumstance you mention is that *London* is the chief Object of your Intentions, now I will ingenuously own to you that my chief Motive for inviting you to *Dublin* this Season, is to try in the Course of it whether a Plan might not be propos'd which should engage you there for some Years. I have been long weary of the Stage, and as I have a much more important Point in View, am determin'd to quit it as soon as possible; and no Consideration should have induced me to undertake it this Year, but the want of a proper Person to supply

my Place. From the Accounts I have had of Mr. Lee's Affiduity, Regularity of Discipline, Punctuality of Dealings, and his other Merits, I know no Theatrical Person whom I would so readily chuse for a Successor. Were he to pass a Season with me I should have sufficient Opportunities of informing him thoroughly of all Matters which a long Experience may have taught me, with Relation to the *Dublin Stage*, and the Knowledge of which may contribute not a little to its future Success. I should imagine that the *Prospect* of being *at the Head of the Theatre-Royal in Ireland*, might be an Object not unworthy your Ambition, and I am sure with tolerable Management, it must answer extremely well in point of Profit.

But as I intend to perform myself this Season, your use as an Actor, and consequently your Emoluments cannot be so great as they probably will be hereafter. The Sallary which I would propose to you for this Season is threè hundred Pounds, and that is one hundred more than I would give to any other Man living one only excepted, I shall request your Sentiments upon this Head as soon as possible. If the Proposal should not be agreeable to you, I have some strong Reasons to wish that it may be kept secret; for this I shall rely on your Honour nor have I the least Doubt but that I may do it with Safety.

I am Sir,

Your most obedient,

Aug. 12th, 1756.
Henrietta-Street,
Covent-Garden.

and very humble Servant,

THOMAS SHERIDAN.

P. S. I have answered yours immediately on the Receipt, I was not in Town when it reached *London*—pray present my Compliments to Mrs *Lee*—and to Signor *Pasquali*, whose Letter I shall answer soon.

To *Thomas Sheridan, Esq;*

At the Seven-Stars in *Henrietta-Street Covent-Garden London.*

S I R,

B EING four Miles out of Town when I receiv'd the Favour of your Letter, I could not conveniently answer it by Return of the Post; but take this earliest Opportunity of delivering my Sentiments thereon, *viz.* When those Circumstances, which you conceive Obstacles to our Agreement are slightly discuss'd, the Determinations will I believe be very brief and ingenuous.

First, as to Mrs. *Lee*; let me assure you, that I should hold myself cheap both in Principles and Judgment, were it possible Partiality (tho' *allowable*, as you favourably express it) could mislead me into an Intrusion of her Abilities, either on the Town or Manager; but when public Prejudices are known to have a private Source,* I am apprehensive such Things may, at our Interview, be advanced upon that Head relative to her former Situation, as you (who were never judged accessary thereto) will not attempt to disprove, and which the Rawness of her Talents then afforded

* This refers to a person of consequence, and power, [who was that season engag'd to Mr. Sheridan.]

afforded too many Opportunities of practising against her ; however such References are here both tedious and useless ; 'tis sufficient to observe, that in Point of Profit she will never demand more than her Merit palpably entitles her to (I mean in the Opinion of the Manager, provided he is as candid and judicious as Mr. *Sheridan* is admitted to be.) Let there be a moderate Reserve made in the Distribution of Parts, with suitable Advantages of Dress, &c. and I here give my Honour, that your's and the Town's Acceptation shall, without the least Interposition of mine, determine her Fate ; as I am sure her Pride is too predominant to entertain a Thirst of undeserved Gain ; nor, unless it be evidently your Choice, shall she at the Close of the Season receive a single Shilling.

Now as to myself, I must frankly remark that the Prospect of being at the Head of *Dublin Theatre*, has Charms both lucrative and honorary ; yet, as they are only in Prospect, you'll readily admit, that for Reputation's Sake my first Year should be in some Measure proportion'd to my future Views ; so that, tho' your own Performance and Management will for the ensuing Season prevent the Exertion of my Capacity and Services, yet they may now and then probably relieve your Toil, by taking under my Inspection the Conduct of particular Plays where you are not concern'd.

I should be far from descanting upon my Abilities, were it not necessary to make a modest Observation of my Use both in Tragedy and Comedy, which I have Hopes will be found more adapted to your Purpose than any other Person you can engage. These then, and the following Reasons, have drawn an Exception to your present Pro-

Proposal, on Account of its Inferiority to my real Value: I appeal to your own Breast whether, upon Reflection, you think my Talents and Experience, my Expectations hereafter in *Dublin*, my assured Profits in *London*, and above all my salutary Regard to Fame, will suffer me at this Time of Life, to accept 300*l.* on the same Spot where Mr. *Digges* had 400*l.* I think it will appear impossible, but be that as it may; these are the Terms I must resolve on and offer to your Consideration, assuring you that *Nothing but the Plan you have laid down of FUTURE CONNECTION*, and the *Advantages of the first Performer in your House*, can, in my Opinion, recompense the declining other Proposals.

I am,

S I R,

Your most Obedient,

very Humble Servant,
Edinburgh, Aug.

21, 1756. JOHN LEE.

To Mr. JOHN LEE,

Master of the Theatre in *Edinburgh*.

S I R,

I HAD the Favour of yours of the 21st inst. and must observe to you, that you have been led by some strange Misinformation into a great Error with Respect to the Salary which Mr. *Digges* had

from me, as it did not amount to half the Sum you mention'd. One Season indeed, thro' a mistaken Judgment of something more promising at his setting out than his Performance afterwards made good, I agreed to give him 300*l.* but his Sallary during the succeeding Seasons was only 8*l.* *per Week* Play-House Pay; which did not quite amount to 180*l. per Ann.* But suppose I should at a particular Time have given too large Sallaries to any Performers, must I continue the same to their Successors? The Fact is, I did raise the Price of Performers to a Rate which the Stage of *Dublin* cou'dn't support, and therefore it must be so no more. If you come hereafter to have a Share in Profits (*and it shall be your own Fault if you have not*) you will have Reason to wish that your own Standard should not have been too high, as the Value of all subordinate Performers is rated in Proportion to the Principal. It was a Master-stroke of Policy in Mr. *Garrick*, never to demand a Sallary of more than 500*l.* previous to his commencing Manager, for he could with Justice enforce that Argument to any Capital Performer, who should rate his Value higher, that he never had more himself. And I can assure you that Mr. *Garrick's* Demand for playing a Season with me in *Dublin*, was but 400*l.* I have much more to urge upon this Subject, but as you desire my definitive Answer, I shall give it directly.

The very candid and equitable Manner in which your Proposal is made with Respect to Mrs. *Lee*, hasn't only remov'd my former Objection, but calls upon me to give her every fair Opportunity of standing or falling by her own Merit, as it shall be rated by the Town. I shall therefore agree to give the Sum you demand of 400*l.* for your joint Performance next Season; and this is the utmost Length

Length that I can go at present. If you accept of this Proposal, as far as my small Penetration goes, I think you will have no Reason hereafter to repent it. I request an Answer by the Return of the Post.—If it should be in the Affirmative, the sooner you set out for *Dublin* the better, as I propose to open the Theatre the latter End of next Month. But be it which Way it will, you and Mrs. *Lee* may be always assured of the good Wishes of

Your very humble

Aug. 30th, 1756,
Henrietta-Street,
Covent-Garden.

and obedient Servant,

THOMAS SHERIDAN.

To *Thomas Sheridan, Esq;*

S I R,

I HAD the Pleasure of yours dated 30th *August*, and tho' the Terms thereof are not adequate in present Profit to some other Views I have, yet from the Satisfaction I promise myself in our future Connexions, I shall accept them, provided they are *the first in your House*. This I suppose to be the Case, as 'tis express'd in your Letter that there is but one Man else to whom you would give more than 200*l.* and who I take it for granted will not now be engaged.

To prevent any sort of Misapprehension on either Side, I shall just intimate, that I conceive we both mean *English* Money, and that my Benefit is to be ranked before any other PERSONS in

the Company. I am indeed inclinable to think, that you'll find my Attachment and Assiduity sufficiently advantageous to you to merit its being a clear one; however, that's left to your own Option, as I shall not be punctilious in endeavouring to strain a Stipulation beyond your Power of gratifying——Mrs. Lee's Benefit will, I suppose, be fix'd in Course of Salary; and if by Return of the Post our Treaty be compleated, I must beg you, for particular Reasons, to continue it a Secret till one of us arrive in *Ireland*. Please to accept Mrs. Lee's Compliments, and

I am, SIR, &c.

7 Sept. 1756.

JOHN LEE.

~~✓~~ In the Postscript, I remember there was an Enquiry who else you had engaged of. Consequence.

To Mr. L E E.

S I R,

YESTERDAY I was favour'd with yours of the 7th. Your Terms are far superior to any Person's in the Company, and consequently as you are the first in Rank your BENEFIT must be the FIRST. As to what you mention of *English* Money, I must inform you, that it is a Point never yet granted to any one, tho' sometimes insisted on. Nay, indeed it is one of the most fundamental Rules of the *Irish* Theatre, and which requires the

the strictest Observation. You, who have been a Manager yourself, will more easily see the Force of the Reason on which this Rule is founded; for should the Company be paid in *English* Currency, the it would be but a small Addition to each Individual, it would make a monstrous Difference to the Manager, so as to swallow up a great Part of the Profits. I am sure therefore you are neither so unreasonable as to ask what has never yet been granted to any one; nor would it be your Interest, from *Views of future Connections*, to have so ill a Precedent set now for the first Time. But let us not have any Delays or Cavils about Trifles—I have such an Opinion of your Candour, that I dare venture to *leave it to your own Judgment* when we meet and have talked over the Matter. I must therefore *request* it of you, that you will *set out for Dublin with the utmost Expedition*. It is a Matter of more Consequence to me than I can now represent to you, that you should be in Dublin before the Opening of the Campaign; this will be as early in *October* as possible, but must necessarily be on the 11th, as that is one of the Government Plays. The principal Performers next to you are Mr. King and Mr. Dexter. Mrs. Lee's Benefit will come in Course of Salary. If you direct your Trunks to the Care of Mr. John Knowles on the *Blind-quay*, there will be every thing proper done at the Custom-house. You may assure yourself I shall not say a Word of our Engagement till your Arrival. I just received yours of the 9th, and hope the Gentleman you mention will soon join the Company. I once more earnestly recommend *Expedition* to you. The least Delay might disconcert my Plan in such a Manner that it cou'dn't easily be remedied. When we meet you will be fully convinced of the Cause of my urging this with so much Importance. I know not whether an An-

swer to this will find me in *London*, but I must request that you will, at all Events, write a few Lines, informing me of the Time of your Departure, and what Route you will take to *Dublin*. I am, with Compliments to Mrs. *Lee*, and best Wishes for your good Journey and Voyage,

Your very Obedient,

Sept. 16, 1756.

Humble Servant,

THOMAS SHERIDAN.

To *Thomas Sheridan, Esq;*

SIR,

Edinburgh, 20 Sept. 1756.

I HAD last Night the Favour of yours dated 16th instant, and shall set out I hope in a few Days. Mr. *L*—, the principal Council in my Law-suit here, has been at the Point of Death, but recovers very fast; when he is able to take Instructions of Proceeding during my Absence, I shall have no other Cause of Continuance; However the last Day of this Month shall, at all Hazards, be the utmost Stretch thereof, and even that I will contrive to shorten as much as possible. I purpose setting out for *Whitehaven*, and thence sailing for *Dublin*. Expedition can't, I assure you, be more welcome to you than it is to me, who am all Impatience for a State of Action. Mrs.

Lee

Lee begs her Compliments, and wishes you a safe and speedy Voyage as well as

S I R,

Your most Obedient, and

Obliged Servant,

JOHN LEE.

P. S. The Gentleman whom you expect will set out with me, which he hopes will not be too late, as 'tis most probable we shall all arrive before the Opening of the House.

A PERUSAL of these Letters will furnish ample Ideas of my Expectations in *Dublin* (*to wit.*) That you and I were in every Circumstance *warmly to co-operate without the least Reserve*, and in our mutual Adherence to found the Basis of a growing Estimation by the *fairest and most advantageous Disposal of my Abilities*; this too you knew was requisite, as they had for four Years (by my own Choice) been debarr'd the Gloss and Stamp of a *London* Currency; a Circumstance that (were not Candour and Impartiality the Characteristicks of the Place) might casually have subjected me to much less Approbation than I have been favoured with, especially as I was an entire Stranger, and no welcome Visitant to the Adherents of these Gentlemen, whose Parts I was invited to possess

But since, your Conduct after my Arrival *never once* wore the Aspect of either an *honourable*, or indeed a *meir* Acquittance of these Engagements, I must retaliate the Breach by unravelling your close-knit Web of Design, and trace the Fallacy to its

its very Source : It'll be a *Beacon* to the theatrical World, and extinguish the Power of *luring* any future Merits into the Snare of your temporary and ungentlemanlike Uses.

Be it observed, that when such Letters pass'd between us, your Situation might possibly breed a Doubt of being ever received by the Public again ; on the other Hand Inclination perhaps led you to *evade* (if practicable) the *APOLOGY* you was afterwards compelled to make.

These Points then premis'd (for your Application and Behaviour to me will be strong Testimonials of 'em) how, on a Continuation of the Rupture, was your House to be kept open ? Who could be deputed in your Stead, either as Actor or Manager ? Somebody must—Deliberation (it seems) presented *me* to View, as having given a recent Instance, not only of being qualified to manage a Theatre, but out of a Chaos in *Scotland* to create one : In Consequence therefore of such Circumspection the before-mentioned Treaty was compleated ; and, agreeable to the Paragraphs in your last Letter, Page 11. where you say, “ *I must therefore request it of you, that you will set out for Dublin with the utmost EXPEDITION, it is a Matter of MORE CONSEQUENCE to me than I can now represent to you, that you should be in Dublin before the Opening of the Campaign.* ” And soon after in the same Letter, *I ONCE MORE earnestly recommend EXPEDITION to you ; the LEAST DELAY might DISCONCERT my Plan in such a Manner, as that it COULD NOT EASILY BE REMEDIED. When we MEET you will be fully convinc'd of the CAUSE of my Urging this with so much IMPORTUNITY* ”. I was spur'd on to all imaginable haste in Coming.—But for what pray was all this violent Importance ? *WHAT CAUSE* was

was you to urge to me when we met? How could the least Delay disconcert your Plan, so as not to be easily remedied?—Why, being partly appriz'd of your Reluctance to solve these Questions, I will myself commemorate the EVENT that gave both Birth and End to your soliciting.

I was by opposite Winds detained almost three Weeks at *Whitehaven*, towards the Close of which came on the stated Time of Opening the House; you (it seems) arrived a Night or two before, in a thorny Situation of Mind no doubt that challeng'd almost universal Compassion. The Theatre began, when at (the End of the very first Act), rose an *unforeseen* Conviction that you wou'dn't only be prevented from performing yourself, but that *no* Exhibition of any Kind soever, that had the least Tendency to your Emolument, should go on till a satisfactory Apology was made by you in Person.—*There* came the deadly Potion, *there* drop'd the whole *Pile of Policy*, and as it's foremost Column I sunk under it—Equivocation all was vain, and the Apology was promised: Just after this I landed, and was present at its being agreeably received.—Then all was prosperous, all wore the Face of Gladness and Tranquility, that unhappily declin'd into a sudden and *too great* a Calm: for, when we recount the Neglect shewn from that very instant to all your ensuing Performances, 'twill be looked upon as an inauspicious *Æra* of the Stage, and every individual seem involv'd in your Fate: The Retrospection can raise only Mr. *Wilder*'s Character, who has fortunately been the Support of your Season;—but alas! neither you, nor I, nor Sign^r. *Maraneti*, Sign^r. *Bugiani*,

Bugiani, &c. &c. have had any other Consolation than—*Socios habuisse dolore.*

Now—to the CABINET.

PEACE BEING CONCLUDED gave Birth to new Considerations;—*what Occasion* was there then for me? Why shou'd the Power and Profits be hereafter *shar'd* when there's a Certainty of Re-monopolizing both? So that to counterwork and annihilate the *Professions* made to *decoy* me hither, while your *Fate was in Suspence*, became the Labour of incessant Thought; *PROFESSIONS* too that were made in *WRITING*, *That* was the Fatality!—But to the *Brave* and *Wise* there's nought insuperable! Up starts an apt Expedient;—my Arrival being unluckily prevented till your Pannic was near over, *Policy* and the *sudden Change* of Fortune bad you straight *smother* the propos'd Communication, and by a fly Reserve gradually strive to loosen the Knot of our Alliance; this done, your next Endeavour was to *smooth* me into a *Subordination*: if that fail'd, then let *Diffuse* be productive of *Obscurity*, and by such Means temper me into an Acquiescence with whatever Evasion of Promises you might hereafter think necessary to suggest.

YOUR CONDUCT then thus *nicely plan'd*, I was receiv'd with all the dignify'd Plausibility that constitutes your Character; mix'd and foreign Conversation pass'd an Evening or two with strain'd Civilities, then *Shyness* spoke your Fraud: In short a *total Breach* of every Article ensued; and (your Apprehensions once set at Ease) *Veracity* took speedy Flight.

The

The direct *Refusal* of contracting again *suitable* to the *Tenour of our Correspondence*—The Deprivation of my *Right*, in Point of Benefit, by fixing it in a *singular* and *most injurious* Manner.—The Artifice practis'd to extort a Receipt *in full*, by reserving in your Hands a considerable Sum till the Close of the Season, that (if I refus'd signing it) you might embarrass me with a Law-suit—with *various undermining Minutiæ of Stage-Administration*, are too tedious to particularize at large **UNLESS PUBLICLY CONTRADICTED**; This, I am pretty confident, will never be the Case; since your Perspicuity must needs see the Danger of inviting a stronger Light to be thrown upon your Conduct: Therefore *private Assertions* and deep-concerted Equivocation only can botch up your Excuses, and friendly *Father TIME* be sued to -- for *Oblivion*.—Mr. *Knowles* and *two* other Gentlemen will recollect that, at the same Time I was *oblig'd* to sign the Receipt **IN FULL**, I made a *Protest* against the *Legality* of it; so that *YOU* and I have *still that* Ponit to settle.

Now then let us sum up the Whole; let us see what is to be inferr'd from the Nature of this Transaction?—That your Behaviour (dispassionately speaking) is no Ways adapted to so eligible and distinguish'd a Station; but rather shews a Resemblance of certain *Indian Potentates* who, by the Demolition of any able Friend, think themselves vested with an additional Acquisition of his Endowments; or indeed (on the Information of your frequent Variances with former Persons of theatrical Estimation) I am led to another Similitude, (*viz.*) “ *That of the PAINTER* (mention'd

D. by

by Dean Swift in his 50th Letter to Mr. Gay)
who having painted a COCK, drove away all the
Cocks and Hens, and even the Chickens, for Fear those
who pass'd by the Shop might make a Comparison with
his Work.

I am,

SIR,

Dublin, June
4, 1757.

Yours, &c,

JOHN LEE.